

Message Text

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SUBJECT: STATEMENTS BY CALLAGHAN AND MULLEY IN COMMONS
ON NEUTRON BOMB

PRIME MINISTER CALLAGHAN AND DEFENSE SECRETARY MULLEY
MADE THE FOLLOWING REMARKS IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS
FEBRUARY 21 ON THE NEUTRON BOMB.
BEGIN QUOTE.

MR. GEORGE RODGERS (LAB) HAD ASKED WHEN THE PRIME
MINISTER NEXT EXPECTED TO ATTEND A MEETING OF THE NORTH
ATLANTIC COUNCIL.

MR. CALLAGHAN (LAB)--I EXPECT TO ATTEND THE
MEETING OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL IN WASHINGTON ON
MAY 30 AND 31.

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MR. RODGERS--SHOULD HE ATTEND SUCH A MEETING,
WILL HE CONVEY THE REACTION OF THE ORDINARY DECENT PEOPLE
OF THIS COUNTRY TO THE SUGGESTION THAT THE NEUTRON BOMB
SHOULD BE PART OF THE ARMOURY OF NATO?

WOULD HE ADVOCATE THAT THIS GRUESOME WEAPON THAT
APPARENTLY HAS THE CAPACITY TO DESTROY PEOPLE WHILE
LEAVING PROPERTY INTACT SHOULD BE OUTLAWED AND DENOUNCED

BY THE EASTERN AND WESTERN POWER BLOCKS?

MR. CALLAGHAN--THE NEUTRON BOMB IS A WEAPON THAT IS FEARFUL IN ITS USE BUT NO MORE FEARFUL THAN A NUMBER OF WEAPONS NOW BEING DEVELOPED BY THE SOVIET UNION, INCLUDING THE SS20, FOR EXAMPLE. WE SHOULD NOT TACKLE THIS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF A SINGLE WEAPON.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS THAT THE WORLD DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE WHICH IS GOING TO ASSEMBLE AT THE UNITED NATIONS IN NEW YORK SHOULD TAKE A BROAD VIEW OF THE WHOLE OF THIS PROBLEM.

REAR-ADMIRAL MORGAN-GILES (C)--WHEN THE PRIME MINISTER MEETS HIS NATO COLLEAGUES WILL HE FEEL ABLE TO SPEAK WITH PRIDE ABOUT BRITAIN'S ARMED FORCES? IF SO, WILL HE TAKE HIS MISERABLE LITTLE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE BY THE SCRUFF OF THE NECK--(LABOUR PROTESTS)--AND MAKE HIM DO SOMETHING ABOUT ARMED FORCES PAY NOW? CHOP, CHOP. (LAUGHTER.)

MR. CALLAGHAN--THE ANSWER TO THE FIRST QUESTION IS "YES, ON ALL OCCASIONS". THE SECOND QUESTION MAY NOT BE OUT OF ORDER, BUT I HOPE THE SPEAKER WILL INDICATE THAT HE DOES NOT REGARD IT AS IN GOOD TASTE.

MR. RICHARD CRAWSHAW (LAB)--WHAT THE PRIME MINISTER SAID TODAY WILL APPEAL TO THOSE WHO ARE INTERESTED IN THE DEFENCE OF THIS COUNTRY. WHEREAS FOR 33 YEARS THIS COUNTRY HAS LIVED IN PEACE UNDER THE THREAT OF THE ATOMIC BOMB, THE NEUTRON BOMB WILL PROVIDE
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SUCH A TERROR THAT WAR WILL BE ABOLISHED FROM THE FACE OF THE WORLD FOR EVER.

MR. CALLAGHAN--THE NEUTRON BOMB AND ITS SERIOUS EFFECTS ARE BEING USED BY THE SOVIET UNION AS A PROPAGANDA EXERCISE TO PREVENT DISCUSSION OF SOME OF THE OTHER SERIOUS WEAPONS WHICH ARE BEING DEVELOPED. I WANT TO ENSURE THAT THIS IS ON THE RECORD.

MR. BREZHNEV CAN HELP, IF INSTEAD OF FOCUSING PROPAGANDA ON THE NEUTRON BOMB, HE WILL ENTER INTO SERIOUS DISCUSSIONS IN THE UNITED NATIONS OR ELSEWHERE ON HOW WE ARE TO DEAL WITH SOME OF THE OTHER WEAPONS NOW BEING DEVELOPED AND ON WHICH RESEARCH IS TAKING PLACE.

THERE IS A FORMIDABLE PROSPECT FACING THE WORLD ON THIS MATTER. I DO NOT WANT TO SEE THE WORLD DESTROYED BY OUR TERROR, NOR DO I WANT US TO SUCCUMB TO BLACKMAIL BY SOMEONE ELSE'S TERROR. IT IS IN THAT SPIRIT THAT WE MUST APPROACH IT.

ON FEBRUARY 1 THE UNITED KINGDOM SUBMITTED A DRAFT PROGRAMME OF ACTION TO THE UNITED NATIONS WHICH CALLED FOR THE FOLLOWING THINGS:

(L) TO CURB THE ACCUMULATION AND DEVELOPMENTS OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS BY INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT;

(2) A TREATY TO ASSURE THE WORLD THAT THOSE WHO RENOUNCE THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS WILL NOT HAVE IT USED AGAINST THEM;

(3) TO EXTEND CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES NOW OPERATIONAL IN EUROPE TO OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD; AND

(4) TO ARRIVE AT A COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN TREATY AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

THAT IS THE KIND OF PRACTICAL PROGRAMME I WANT TO PUT FORWARD AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

MR. WINSTON CHURCHILL, AN OPPOSITION SPOKESMAN ON DEFENCE (C)--WHAT DISCUSSIONS HAVE THE GOVERNMENT HAD WITH THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT ABOUT THE RECENT DEPLOYMENT OF THE MOBILE INTERMEDIATE RANGE SS20 MISSILE WHICH HAS A DESTRUCTIVE POTENTIAL LITERALLY THOUSANDS OF TIMES
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GREATER THAN THAT OF THE THEATRE NUCLEAR NEUTRON BOMB?

MR. CALLAGHAN--FOR ONCE IN A WHILE I FIND MYSELF IN AGREEMENT WITH MR. CHURCHILL. THE SS20 IS A FAR MORE DANGEROUS WEAPON THAN THE NEUTRON BOMB. THAT IS WHY I DO NOT WANT US TO FOCUS ATTENTION ON A SINGLE WEAPON.

THERE ARE WEAPONS ON BOTH SIDES WHICH MUST ENTER INTO COMPREHENSIVE DISARMAMENT DISCUSSIONS.

AT THE END OF QUESTION TIME, REAR-ADMIRAL MORGAN-GILES SAID ON A POINT OF ORDER THAT HE HAD MEANT NOTHING PERSONAL BUT HAD WISHED TO DRAW AN IMPORTANT POINT TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S ATTENTION. HE THEN NODDED VIGOROUSLY AT MR. CALLAGHAN AND AMID SOME LAUGHTER BLEW A KISS IN THE DIRECTION OF THE GOVERNMENT FRONT BENCH.

EARLIER DURING QUESTION TIME THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE (MR. FREDERICK MULLEY) WAS ASKED BY A CONSERVATIVE MP TO URGE THE PRIME MINISTER TO GIVE A ROBUST REPLY TO MR. BREZHNEV ON THE QUESTION OF THE NEUTRON BOMB.

MR. MULLEY (LAB) SAID THAT HE WOULD BE MEETING HIS NATO COLLEAGUES IN APRIL AND MAY, ALTHOUGH NOT FOR THE SPECIFIC PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING THE ENHANCED RADIATION/REDUCED BLAST WARHEAD.

MR. PETER BLAKER (C)--WHEN HE NEXT MEETS HIS NATO COLLEAGUES FOR DISCUSSION ON THAT SUBJECT, WILL HE MAKE THE POINT THAT THE ARGUMENT THAT THE NEUTRON BOMB IS PARTICULARLY REPREHENSIBLE BECAUSE IT KILLS HUMANS BUT DOES NOT DESTROY PROPERTY, IS UNTENABLE IN THE SENSE THAT IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN APPLIED ALSO TO THE ARROW AND CHEMICAL WEAPONS DEPLOYED IN LARGE QUANTITIES BY THE RUSSIANS?

WILL HE URGE THE PRIME MINISTER TO GIVE A ROBUST REPLY TO MR. BREZHNEV'S LETTER?

MR. MULLEY--IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT THE ORIGINAL
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UNBELIEVABLE PUBLICITY WITH WHICH THIS SO-CALLED NEUTRON BOMB WAS LAUNCHED IS INDEFENSIBLE.

THERE ARE PROBLEMS ABOUT THE QUESTION OF ITS IMPACT ON ARMS CONTROL NEGOTIATIONS AND THE REST. THE GOVERNMENT, LIKE NEARLY ALL THE OTHER NATO COUNTRIES, HAVE NOT FORMED A FINAL VIEW ABOUT THIS. I CANNOT PREDICT WHEN WITHIN THE ALLIANCE THAT FINAL VIEW WILL BE TAKEN.

MR. JAMES LAMOND (LAB)--TO DEPLOY THE NEUTRON BOMB IN WESTERN EUROPE MUST LOWER THE THRESHOLD OF NUCLEAR WAR.

PRESIDENT BREZHNEV WAS IN EARNEST WHEN HE SAID IN THE KREMLIN ON NOVEMBER 2 THAT THE SOVIET UNION WOULD DEVELOP SIMILAR WEAPONS IF THE NEUTRON BOMB WERE PLACED IN WESTERN EUROPE AT ENORMOUS COST, A COST WHICH NEITHER THE WARSAW PACT NOR NATO COULD AFFORD AND WHICH WOULD ONLY SERVE TO INCREASE THE ENORMOUS ARMS EXPENDITURE OF THE WORLD UNNECESSARILY.

MR. MULLEY--THE ARGUMENT ABOUT WHETHER THE INCREASED MILITARY CAPABILITY OF THE BOMB FOR THE PURPOSE OF ATTACKING, FOR EXAMPLE, TANK FORMATIONS WOULD LEAD TO IT BEING USED MORE READILY AND THEREFORE LOWERING THE THRESHOLD, IS A SERIOUS POINT AND ONE WE ARE TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION.

I CANNOT PREDICT WHAT THE FINAL NATO DECISION WOULD BE. IF IT WSHOULD HAPPEN THAT THIS WEAPON IS BROUGHT IN, IT WOULD BE IMPORTANT NOT IN ANY WAY TO RELAX POLITICAL CONTROL OVER THE AUTHORIZED USE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS. END QUOTE. STREATOR UNQTE VANCE

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